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TAGS: [CT](#) [PARM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: S/CT AMBASSADOR BENJAMIN DISCUSSES
COUNTER-TERRORISM WITH HIGH LEVEL SOUTH ASIAN AND AFRICAN
REPRESENTATIVES

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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¶1. (U) Summary: S/CT Ambassador Daniel Benjamin met with representatives from Algeria, Burundi, India, Pakistan, and Uganda on the margins of the opening session of the UN General Assembly in New York September 24 and 25 to discuss counterterrorism issues. In general, Benjamin conveyed his interest in establishing a dialogue on such issues. He discussed the issue of ransom payments to terrorists with Algeria, the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) with India, his concerns about Lashkar-e-Taiba with Pakistan, and the recent bombing of the African Union headquarters in Mogadishu with Burundi and Uganda. END SUMMARY

Algerian Foreign Minister

¶2. (C) During his meeting with Algerian Foreign Minister Medelci, Benjamin praised Algeria's demonstrated resolve to fight terrorism, and reaffirmed the Obama Administration's interest in partnering closely with Algeria. Benjamin also expressed interest in visiting Algeria. Medelci welcomed the possible visit, and said cooperation with the United States, such as intelligence sharing in the area of counter-terrorism was essential. Medelci expressed solidarity with Algeria's neighboring countries, but also noted some concern about their counter-terrorism capabilities. He said that Algeria is interested in strengthening cooperation and working with its neighbors to address social and economic problems that added to instability in the region.

¶3. (C) Medelci also raised the issue of ransom payments and pointed out that such payments by foreign governments greatly concern Algeria in the fight against AQIM. He said that Algeria hoped to introduce a resolution at the United Nations to criminalize ransom payments. Medelci said the African Union had been supportive and he hoped the USG would be as well. Benjamin emphasized USG concern with respect to ransom payments, but said more specifics about the resolution and information on Algeria's next steps would be necessary for the USG to react. He specifically counseled against criminalizing ransom payments. Benjamin said he planned to travel to Europe to exhort European governments to stop all ransom payments and added that the USG and Algeria must be careful to approach this initiative in such a way as to encourage governments to take a strong stand without creating resentment. Medelci opined that some European governments regretted paying ransoms, but had acted out of a perceived obligation to their citizens and said a UN resolution could provide cover for these governments to refuse to pay ransoms.

Pakistani Regional Secretary for UN Affairs

¶4. (C) Ambassador Benjamin met with the Pakistani Regional Secretary for UN Affairs Munawar Saeed Bhati to discuss multilateral counter-terrorism issues including UN Security Council Resolution 1267, regional CT coordination and the current status of the Pakistani investigation of the Mumbai bombings. Benjamin conveyed that resolution 1267 is an important tool to address counter terrorist activities and urged Pakistan to make more use of it.

¶5. (C) Benjamin also emphasized the need for further CT bilateral meetings between Pakistan and the USG, as well as the importance of greater regional cooperation, possibly in the form of a regional meeting. Bhatti agreed and said that not only the working level cooperation between Pakistan and the United States needs to be increased but also the level of cooperation between India and Pakistan and specifically with respect to India's investigation of the Mumbai bombings. Benjamin indicated his desire to see greater cooperation between Pakistan and India on investigating the attacks, and reiterated that effective prosecution of suspects resulting in convictions of those responsible is critical. Benjamin said that he had broached the topic of more information sharing with the Indians and would continue to do so. Benjamin further expressed his concern regarding Lashkar-e-Taiba, which while outside of Bhatti's portfolio, could have destabilizing effects through South Asia.

Pakistani Interior Minister

¶6. (C) Ambassador Benjamin met with the Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik and discussed CT cooperation in South Asia and challenges for CT programs in the region. Malik indicated that he hoped Ambassador Benjamin would come to

Pakistan to meet with Pakistan's other CT players, see how Pakistan is dealing with CT issues and to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. Malik indicated that the major challenges for CT efforts included the need to improve coordination among CT-relevant departments, further target extremists and improve the sharing of information and databases allowing for CT action. Ambassador Benjamin indicated that Lashkar-e-Taiba (LT) was of great concern to the United States. Malik responded that Pakistan had already blocked the LT from helping with disaster relief, was not permitting them to provide social work of any kind, and was seizing their accounts.

¶7. (C) Malik assured Ambassador Benjamin that Pakistan had good information on the Mumbai attacks and would both prosecute and convict those responsible. He stressed that India needed to be more forthcoming with hard evidence to help Pakistan, since India had access to the crime scene.

¶8. (C) Benjamin raised the issue of another Pakistan/U.S. bilateral meeting and asked what Pakistan thought about adding Afghanistan to the discussion. Malik asserted that Pakistan would meet anywhere/anytime to discuss CT issues, but recommended that the discussions begin with the two parties before adding a third. The minister also commented that a larger regional conference including Afghanistan, India, China and Bangladesh would make sense, noting that the fourth Interpol Summit in Singapore could be a good time to conduct a meeting on the margins.

¶9. (C) After Benjamin raised the issue of de-radicalization in prisons, Malik indicated that Pakistan would be happy to have help in this area, pointing to the Saudi model. On the issue of radicalization in the Punjab region, Malik said that programs to fund schools and alleviate poverty would be most effective at undermining radicalization and the LT. With respect to resolution 1267, Malik insisted that Pakistan already maintains and monitors a list of individuals, and has effectively dealt with any concerns. The minister went on to comment that Pakistan is not the only country that has complications related to resolution 1267.

Indian Joint Secretary on UN Political and CT Affairs

¶10. (C) Discussion with Indian Joint Secretary (UN Political and Counter-terrorism) Ministry of External Affairs, Asith Bhattacharjee, focused on the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT). Benjamin conveyed that the United States is poised to support India in the upcoming 6th committee meeting of the UNGA on this issue but does not want to "poison the well". As a result, Benjamin said that the United States is prepared to speak with individual OIC states, but prefers to act "behind the scenes" and hoped India would take the lead with any next steps. He also shared that the United States is ready to work from the 2002 text and include a reference to the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (Strategy) in the preamble of the draft convention. Benjamin said that the United States would like to include, at least initially, only a short reference to the Strategy in the preamble so that there is some negotiation room in anticipation of likely adjustments by the OIC.

¶11. (C) Bhattacharjee responded that India is ready to move forward to conclude negotiations and said he would convey to Chairman Perera (Sri Lanka) that this year's 6th committee discussion should begin using the 2002 text as a basis. He also said that since last year's discussion in the 6th Committee and at the ad hoc meeting this past July focused on the 2007 coordinator's text, it will be a bit difficult to do an about face and focus on the 2002 text. Nonetheless, Bhattacharjee reiterated India's support for using the 2002 text as a basis for this year's discussion. Sounding a bit pessimistic, Bhattacharjee shared that the recent release of the Goldstone Report on Gaza may cast a shadow and limit progress. Bhattacharjee said that within the OIC, Egypt is still a problem but added that Senegal, Jordan, Turkey, and Afghanistan are all with India in terms of trying to move forward to conclude negotiations.

¶12. (C) In closing, Ambassador Benjamin shared that he had met with Pakistani Interior Minister Malik earlier in the day and that Pakistan needs as much evidence as possible from India with respect to the bombings in Mumbai in order to ensure convictions. Bhattacharjee responded that he would convey this message back to Delhi.

Burundi Minister of Foreign Affairs

¶13. (U) Ambassador Benjamin's meeting with Burundi's Minister of Foreign Affairs Augustin Nsanze focused on Somalia. Benjamin conveyed the USG's sincerest condolences to Burundi for the recent bombing of AMISOM headquarters in Mogadishu. Benjamin also underscored the importance of AMISOM's mission. Nsanze said that three of his Ministers were at a meeting in Kampala with representatives of Somalia to discuss the bombings, but had not reached any conclusions. He said that Burundi's victims had been buried in Bujumbura on September 20. He also noted that AMISOM's mission in Somalia would be different since the attacks occurred. He said the troops were attacked and are unable to defend themselves because they have insufficient weapons and equipment. Nsanze also said that AMISOM's mandate does not allow its personnel to be proactive with respect to preventing attacks. As a fix, Nsanze said the Security Council needs to provide a clear mandate for the peacekeeping mission in Somalia that includes Chapter VII authority. Ultimately, he said the mission in Somalia needs to become a UN mission. He said that several African countries including Ghana are hesitating to send troops to serve in AMISOM because the pay is so much less than the pay received by troops serving under a UN peacekeeping mission.

¶14. (U) Ambassador Benjamin acknowledged Nsanze's burden sharing concerns and the enormous challenges, but said that Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is giving Somalia the best chance for improvement that it has had in a

long time. He also said the USG wants AMISOM to succeed.

Ugandan Permanent Representative to the United Nations

¶14. (U) Ambassador Benjamin's discussion with Uganda's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda, included the recent bombing of AMISOM headquarters in Mogadishu. Ambassador Benjamin conveyed the USG's sincerest condolences and underscored the importance of AMISOM's mission. He also conveyed that today, Somalia has the best hope that it has had in quite a long time. Benjamin also stated that the situation in Somalia is a destabilizing factor for the entire region, without any easy fix, so any solution would have to be taken step by step. Ruhakan responded that the UN Security Council must take action but acknowledged that challenges within the African Union need to be addressed to allow it to contribute more significantly to solving problems in the region.

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